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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (11/24): Prisoner Exchange and
Settlement Freeze Dominate Coverage Despite Cynicism

Main Stories:

-----Dailies prominently lead with news that the prisoner
exchange deal will be concluded in coming days. Reports note that a
Hamas delegation went to Cairo yesterday to meet with the German
mediator.

Dailies report, quoting Israeli sources, that the legal advisor of
the GOI has completed military orders calling for a settlement
freeze in West Bank areas, excluding Jerusalem, in preparation for a
possible resumption of Palestinian-Israeli negotiations. The
coverage notes that the orders will be prepared in coordination with
the Israeli cabinet. Al-Ayyam reports that Israel has approved a
10-month settlement freeze proposal, excluding Jerusalem, which will
be presented to the Israeli cabinet for endorsement.

Dailies report on yesterday's PA cabinet meeting in which the
cabinet rejected all interim solutions proposed lately by Israeli
officials.

Dailies report on President Abu Mazen visit to Argentina. During
his meeting with Argentine President Cristina Kirchner, Abbas stated
that Israel must stop all settlement activity including natural
growth and abide by its road map obligations. The Argentine
President opined that the US should do more to ensure the resumption
of peace negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis.

Independent daily Al-Ayyam front pages yesterday's announcement by
the PA cabinet that on Sunday the United Arab Emirate (UAE
transferred financial assistance to the PA treasury, valued at 100
million euros. During its weekly meeting yesterday, the cabinet
expressed gratitude and appreciation to the UAE for its generous
support.

Al-Quds reports that Hamas Minister of Interior, Fathi Hammad, has convinced other Palestinian factions to halt rocket attacks against Israel.

Ma'an and dailies report that Israeli authorities banned Fatah official for Jerusalem Affairs, Hatem Abdul Qader, from coming within 150 meters of the Al-Aqsa Mosque for the next six months. Abdul Qader was arrested by Israeli authorities three times in recent months during confrontations with Israeli soldiers at the Mosque.

BLOCK QUOTES:

Al-Quds and Al-Ayyam ran a number of op-ed today that focused on the status and history of Palestinian-Israeli negotiations and attempts by the Palestinian Authority to seek UN recognition of the establishment of a Palestinian state.

Al-Ayyam runs an editorial under the title "Reviving the initiative" in which it outlines the factors that hurt the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations. In the editors' view, one of the main factors was President Obama's retreat from calling for a stop of all new settlement construction as a precondition for the negotiations. "Obama's reversal shocked the Palestinian leadership" and ended all hopes for successful and meaningful negotiations. The editorial

JERUSALEM 00002113 002 OF 002

calls on Palestinians to maximize the worldwide support they have received and move forward in requesting UN recognition of a Palestinian state.

Hani Al-Masri, another opinion leader, opined in Al-Ayyam under the title "It is Early to Note a Failure of Negotiations" that it is premature to predict the failure of the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations despite all the challenges. In his opinion, moderate Arab States who have signed agreements with Israel won't allow the negotiations to fail.

Hana Issa, professor of international law at Birzeit University, in a commentary in independent daily Al-Quds, opined that the international community must take effective steps to end the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands in keeping with international law and should exert more pressure on Israel, as the occupying authority, to respect United Nation resolutions.

Naji Shurrah opines in Al-Quds under the title "What remains of negotiations?" (11/24): "Negotiations are important and remain an option...however; the US wasn't a balanced and neutral mediator because of its bias towards Israel, which contributed to the failure of the negotiations...For negotiations to succeed, the whole climate must change and the US must learn from the past how to take a balanced role in managing the negotiations."

RUBINSTEIN